# Mary Hilliard Hinton and the antisuffragists

#### By Elna Green

he Senate galleries were packed. North Carolina's senators were about to vote on one of the most controversial issues of the day. The atmosphere was so tense that the Senate decided to do something it had never done before. Public seating areas were officially divided. Woman's suffrage supporters sat on the left side of the gallery, antisuffragists on the right. The trademark colors of the suffragists—yellow and white could be seen on banners, badges, and armbands, while the antisuffragists distributed red roses.

The stakes were high, and the eyes of the entire country were turned toward Raleigh. As of August 17, 1920, thirty-five states had ratified the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. nicknamed the Susan B. Anthony amendment in honor of the pioneer suffragist. Only one more state was needed to ratify the amendment to grant women the right to vote. But none of the remaining states had strong suffrage movements; none were considered certain to ratify. Observers considered North Carolina questionable at best.

Others were more certain that North Carolina would firmly reject the Nineteenth Amendment. Mary Hilliard Hinton, leader of the antisuffrage movement in the state, had argued against enfranchising women for years. The most prominent figure in the movement. she had helped organize the state's two antisuffrage associations. Hinton felt certain the antisuffragists had enough votes in the state Senate to prevent ratification.

WE SERVE THAT OUR STATE MAY LIVE; AND LIVING, PRESERVE THE UNION

NORTH CAROLINA BRANCH

The Southern League for the Rejection of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment

HEADQUARTERS: HOTEL RALEIGH, RALEIGH, N. C.

MRS. JANES B. PHOGRAD

PROSIDEST N. G. BRANCH
MISS MARY HILLIAMS HISTOR,
MIDWAY PLANTACION, BALKISH

July /2, 1920. Munn

MOREGERA CETY
EBECTITE COMMITTEE
MES. W. W. KITCHIN
MAS. T. M. ASHS
MAS. R. T. McCluttenon
Mas. R. B. ETHERE
MES. JOHN LONDON
MAS. MESSACH ALLES

ADVESORY BOARS

ADVESORY BOARS
JOSEPH TROUBY CHESTIFIC,
RALBEST OF
TAKER FOLL,
WARRESTON
TO RECHARD DULARS,
ROBERTON

The women of North Carolina, fully alive to the danger which threatens white supremacy, have Name General Lat. you know, tremendous out of the Suthern League for Baumer Lat. organized a branch of the Southern League for the you know, tremendous out of state pressure will be Man. John Edward Calsan Woodgit to bear on our Legislature at its special

BALKER SHOWN CHRISTIAN, OUGIST to bear on our Legis Session, convening shortly.

RAISES TO S. HALLESS THE SUffs say: "It's bear on was a M. W. Wassel, be misled by that propaganda Gerges West A. W. Garres They would be in Paris by the Mark Street Convenience of the Suffs say: "It's bearing the Convenience of the Suffs say: "It's bearing the Convenience of the Suffs say: "It's bear of the Convenience of the Suffs say: "It's bearing the Convenience of the Suffs say: "It's bearing the Convenience of the C The Suffs say: "It's bound to come." Don't be misled by that propaganda. The Germans said they would be in Paris by Christmas, but they were mistaken.

> Shall North Carolina be the state to force upon Delaware, Haryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana an amendment which the people of those states have already rejected?

If North Carolina ratifies, her Representatives in Congress will have no grounds on which to join the other Southern men in opposing the three

The fight is on - the issues are clear - where

M. B. Brand,
W. F. Brand,
Join the other Southern a
Force Bills now pending.

WHALLISTON
B. W. WINSTON,
JULIE ORGEN BOONIES
WARRINGTON
W. H. WILLIAMWON,
R. L. Brand,
M. L. WILLIAMWON,
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R. L. WILLIAM If you believe in the principle of local self government, if you think that the Old North State is still able to manage her own sffairs, if you object to giving Congress at Washington the power to control local elections, then speak or write to your Senator and Representatives asking them to reject the Anthony Amendment and send us your name, and some money if you can, but your name anyway. Please show this literature to your friends and ask them to do the same.

Yours sincerely.

Mary Hilliard Hinton, a leader in the antisuffrage movement, argued against woman's suffrage in this letter to Senator Romulus Nunn. She used the issues of white supremacy and the right of individual states to determine their own destinies to support her stand.

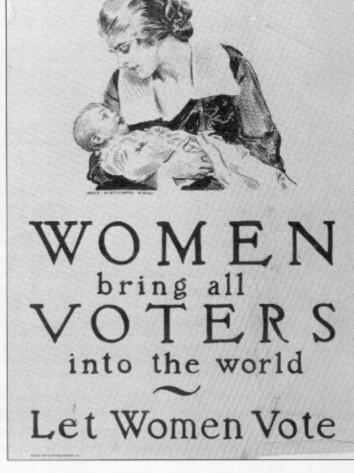
The antisuffragists had good reason to feel confident about the outcome of the legislative vote. They were from important political families

that held much political and economic influence. Antisuffrage women had had husbands in the legislature, uncles in the governor's mansion, and



North Carolinians were greatly divided over the issue of woman's suffrage, as illustrated in this scene (Above) on Raleigh's Fayetteville Street, where the North Carolina Equal Suffrage Association and the antisuffrage States' Rights Defense League had headquarters almost next door to each other.

This prosuffrage poster (Near right) attempted to remind men who already had the vote where they came from. The antisuffrage pamphlet (Far right, top and bottom) mixed hints for cooking and cleaning, then considered the most acceptable of female tasks, with antisuffrage propaganda.



## Housewives!

- You do not need a ballot to clean out your sink spout. A handful of potash and some boiling water is quicker and cheaper.
- If new tinware be rubbed all over with fresh lard, then thoroughly heated before using, it will never rust.
- Use oatmeal on a damp cloth to clean white paint.
- Control of the temper makes a happier home than control of elections.
- When boiling fish or fowls, add juice of half a lemon to the water to prevent discoloration.
- Celery can be freshened by being left over night in a solution of salt and water.
- Good cooking lessens alcoholic craving quicker than a vote.
- Why vote for pure food laws, when your husband does that, while you can purify your ice-box with saleratus water?
- Common sense and common salt applications stop hemorrhage quicker than ballots.
- Clean your mirrors with water to which a little glycerine has been added. This prevents steaming and smoking.
- Sulpho naphthol and elbow grease drive out bugs quicker than political hot air.
- To drive out mice, scatter small pieces of camphor in cupboards and drawers. Peddlers and suffs are harder to scare.
- To remove shine from serge, sponge with hot water and vinegar and press in usual manner.
- Clean houses and good homes, which cannot be provided by legislation, keep children healthier and happier than any number of uplift laws.
- Butter on a fresh burn takes out the sting. But what removes the sting of political defeat?
- Clean dirty wall paper with fresh bread.
- When washing colored hosiery, a little salt in the water will prevent colors from running.
- If an Anti swallows bichloride, give her whites of eggs, but if it's a suff, give her a vote.

### Spot Removers

The following methods for removing spots and stains will be found efficacious.

- Grass stains may be removed from linen with alcohol.
- Fruit stains may be removed in the same way, but hot alcohol works quicker.
- To remove axle grease, soften first with lard,
- Kerosene removes vaseline marks.
- Sour milk removes ink spots.
- Discolorations and stains on bath enamel may be removed by turpentine.
- Leather stains on light colored hoslery may be removed by borax.

There is, however, no method known by which mud-stained reputations may be cleaned after bitter political campaigns. cousins in Congress. Their families owned plantations down east and textile mills in the Piedmont Region. And they believed they had a great deal to fear from woman's suffrage.

The antisuffragists often claimed that women's pure and noble nature would be spoiled by entering politics. They often predicted that voting would harm motherhood and womanhood, but they actually had other concerns about woman's suffrage. The "anti's" included women like Sallie Mayo

Cameron, whose husband,
Bennehan Cameron, was a planter
and railroad magnate, and like
Gabrielle Waddell, whose husband,
Alfred Waddell, was a former United
States congressman and a leader
against black enfranchisement.
These antisuffragists were not
actually afraid of voting themselves.
They believed it was dangerous to let
other women vote.

Antisuffragists feared that women would vote for **reforms** that they

opposed, such as laws for equal pay or to regulate child labor. North Carolina's textile industry relied heavily on the cheap labor of women and children for its profits. Opponents of woman's suffrage worried that women would vote in a block outside the two major political parties. They feared such a vote would throw current politicians out of office and cause the Democratic Party to lose control over the state government.



Gertrude Weil of Goldsboro (Far left) was a driving force in the woman's suffrage movement in North Carolina.

### Gertrude Weil: suffragist leader

#### By Elna Green

While many North Carolinians believed that women ought to be allowed to vote, the most active and prominent suffragists were white women of the urban middle class. Suffrage organizations refused to admit African American

women into their ranks, regardless of how dedicated they might be to the goal of woman's suffrage.

Gertrude Weil (1879–1971), president of the state's Equal Suffrage League in 1920, came from a wealthy family in Goldsboro. Having graduated in 1901 from Smith College in Massachusetts, she was very well educated for a woman of that time. As an unmarried woman, Weil did not have as many domestic responsibilities as most other women had. She was able to devote her entire adult life to public service, religious activities, and a variety of reform movements.

Like many suffragists, Weil first joined her local woman's club. Club women often worked to solve some of the problems of urban life. They raised money to build new schools, built playgrounds for poor children, and established public libraries.

Club women sometimes pushed for social reforms such as stricter child labor laws. These efforts often met with opposition from those in power, and the women soon learned to resent their lack of political clout. Gertrude Weil and other activist women learned that politicians listened to voters but quietly ignored all others. The suffrage movement was born when Weil, and others like her, concluded that women needed the vote in order to help others.

# **VOTES FOR WOMEN**

This yellow and white banner belonged to Gertrude Weil. Banners like these hung in woman's suffrage headquarters and may have also been worn by some suffragists.

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After tabling the woman's suffrage amendment, North Carolina legislators sent this telegram to the Tennessee General Assembly, urging the members to vote it down. They argued that suffrage should not be forced upon the states that had already voted against it. Tennessee passed the Nineteenth Amendment, securing its ratification.

Most of all, however, antisuffragists in North Carolina opposed letting black women vote. They warned that any possible good to come from enfranchising educated white women would be more than offset by masses of poor black women entering the voting booths. Black voters would return the state to the "dark days of Reconstruction" (1865-1877), when former slaves held political power and white supremacy seemed doomed. One antisuffragist poster pleaded "in the Name of Virginia Dare, that North Carolina Remain White."

This fear of black voters might seem illogical, considering that North Carolina had **disfranchised** its black population back in 1901 by requiring **literacy** for voting. Literate black voters were kept away from the polls by threats and other pressures. But the antisuffragists feared these methods would not keep black

women from voting. They warned that the literacy requirement would not work, for the "colored people are decreasing their percentage of illiteracy very fast, especially among their women and girls."

Antisuffragists were not willing to sit back and allow such a threat to white supremacy to go unchallenged. In May 1920 they formed two organizations to fight against woman's suffrage: the Southern Rejection League, a women's organization headed by Mary Hilliard Hinton, and the States' Rights Defense League, a men's group led by William Holt Williamson, a textile manufacturer. Both groups had members from the state's wealthiest families, including Samuel A. Ashe, Raleigh newspaper editor; Elizabeth Cheshire, wife of Episcopal bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire: and Musette Kitchin. wife of former Governor and

Congressman William Kitchin.

By the time the North Carolina legislature met that August to debate the Nineteenth Amendment, the antisuffragists had spent the summer hard at work. They had published a newspaper called the *States'* Defense, which described all the reasons they opposed woman's suffrage. They also held public rallies and sent **petitions** to their legislators urging them to vote against the amendment.

The House of Representatives, hoping to avoid the issue as long as possible, decided to **table** the amendment until after all other business of the session had been completed. That move put pressure on the Senate, which scheduled a vote for August 17. After five hours of debate, the Senate paused to vote. Then, in a surprise move, Lindsay C. Warren of Beaufort County moved to table the



This political cartoon shows an antisuffragist fighting against time to stop the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

amendment until the next session of the legislature. Warren claimed that the members of the current legislature had been elected before it was known they would be voting on this momentous issue.

Therefore, the local voters did not get the chance to express their opinion on the issue by voting for a candidate based on his position on woman's suffrage.

The senators agreed with Warren, by a vote of twenty-five to twentythree. The amendment was dead in North Carolina. Antisuffragists were jubilant. They believed they had successfully defeated another challenge to white supremacy. But their celebration was short-lived. The next day, Tennessee voted to ratify, providing the final vote needed. Women in North Carolina, both black and white, were to be enfranchised. The action of another southern state had made it possible.



#### Definitions

An issue is controversial if it sparks strong disagreement on both sides.

Antisuffragists opposed a woman's right to vote. Suffragists supported a woman's right to vote.

When legislators vote to pass a bill and make it law, it is ratified.

Allowing people to have a say in matters that affect them, usually through the right to vote, is enfranchising them. If people have their vote taken away, they are said to be disfranchised.

A prominent person is well known or important.

A magnate is a person of great rank or power in a certain area of business or industry.

Changes or improvements to a situation are called reforms.

Opposition to an idea is shown by working or speaking against it.

Someone who has clout has influence, political strength, or the power to make decisions.

White supremacy is the practice or idea of keeping white people in power.

Literacy is the ability to read and write. Illiteracy is the lack of that ability.

Petitions are written requests signed by many people.

When legislators decide not to vote on a bill, they table it.

Something of great importance can be described as momentous.